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SUBJECT: LIBERIA: GOVERNMENT REVOKES DIPLOMATIC APPOINTMENTS

REF: A. 06 MONROVIA 1542
[1](#)B. 06 LAGOS 0012

1.(U) SUMMARY: The Government of Liberia has revoked the appointment of all Honorary Consul-Generals, Consuls, Vice Consuls and Ambassadors-at-Large. A Foreign Ministry statement issued on July 31 said that the action is intended to end the misuse of their appointments and curtail the illegal activities being perpetrated by some of the appointees. The decision, according to the Foreign Ministry statement, takes effect as of August 8, 2007. The Foreign Ministry said that after a thorough investigation, appropriate safeguards will be instituted and new appointments made. END SUMMARY.

2.(U) The decision does not affect Honorary-Consuls serving in consulates in Athens, Buenos Aires, Oslo, Victoria/Melbourne, Stegen, Tampa and Madrid. The Foreign Ministry statement said that the above mentioned Honorary-Consuls are performing prime maritime functions or have special assignments. The Foreign Ministry said that it regrets any inconvenience to those affected by the decision, who have rendered professional and honest service to Liberia. Liberia's Permanent Mission to the United Nations has informed all permanent Missions to the United Nations of the decision and requests that all exequaturs issued to affected Liberian honorary consuls in their respective jurisdictions be canceled, except for those officials identified in the circular who are performing maritime functions or special assignments.

3.(SBU) The Foreign Ministry statement said that the decision is an effort to protect the good name and reputation of the Government of Liberia. The acting Assistant Minister for the Americas at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Moiba Fofana, told the Political Assistant that numerous reports from European, Asian and Middle Eastern governments about criminal activities such as money laundering, drug smuggling and illegal sale of Liberian passports by individuals carrying diplomatic Liberian passports posing as honorary consuls, precipitated the GOL decision. He said the situation embarrassed the Government of Liberia. Both the former director of the Passport office, Yvonne Stewart Barr and the current Director, Mary Broh, have told the Embassy that one of their most serious challenges has been getting control of the illegal issuance of Liberian passports. They have complained that corruption of the passport system "goes all the way to the top at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs" and that this reality jeopardized their efforts to impose integrity on the issuance of passports. As previously reported (REF A) issuance of Liberian passports by overseas missions has been a recurring problem.

4.(SBU) COMMENT: It is only a small step, albeit a significant one, in restoring integrity to Liberia's diplomatic service and the passport system. In addition, the GOL has had under consideration for at least 2 years the issuance of a new passport to replace the current hand written passports that are insecure. When the current government took office, it reviewed examples of modern machine

readable passports. Plans to procure replacement passports have gotten hung up in legal wrangling with a company that claims it has a valid contract from the interim government (NTGL). Passport Director Barr sees no early resolution and would like to issue "ECOWAS passports". These passports are like European Union passports in that they are issued by each competent national authority and state both ECOWAS and the country of nationality. Unfortunately we have been told by the Department (CA) that we can not issue U.S. visas in these Liberian ECOWAS passports.END
COMMENT.

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